

SUMMARY

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) recently completed a comprehensive survey of its customers. The Customer Satisfaction Survey was conducted to comply with Executive Order 12862, “Setting Customer Service Standards,” and to meet Reclamation’s own objectives as set forth in strategy 15 of the Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 1997-2002. The purpose of the survey was to help Reclamation (1) gauge the level of satisfaction among its customers and (2) determine ways it could improve its practices to better serve its customers. This report describes the survey process, presents its results, and recommends actions that could be taken by Reclamation to address the significant issues identified by survey respondents.

The survey process began in September 1997. Reclamation asked Argonne National Laboratory (Argonne) to design and conduct the survey. Argonne identified 9,928 customers from lists provided by Reclamation. The customers were sorted by region, and a representative sample of customers was selected (by using the “simple random sample with finite population correction formula”) to receive the survey. In all, 3,011 customers were sent survey instruments, and 835 responded, resulting in a 30% response rate. The survey instrument was designed in December 1997 and received Office of Management and Budget approval for distribution in May 1998. The survey was distributed to a representative sample of Reclamation’s customers in June 1998, and completed surveys were received in July 1998. Survey results were analyzed during August and September 1998.

The survey queried customers in five broad areas: (1) Doing Business with the Bureau of Reclamation, (2) Assessing the Bureau of Reclamation’s Staff, (3) Evaluating the Bureau of Reclamation’s Performance, (4) Your Ideas, and (5) Information about You. Customers were asked to respond to 19 questions — 15 closed-ended and 4 open-ended.

Overall, the majority of customers responding to the survey commented favorably on Reclamation's customer service. They said Reclamation was doing a good to excellent job with regard to most aspects of providing customer service. Customers generally found Reclamation staff to be courteous, helpful, and knowledgeable. Customers specifically named 51 individuals as outstanding performers, and only three individuals were named for poor performance. Numerous comments were also received regarding the outstanding performance of specific Reclamation offices and groups of staff (e.g., engineers and secretaries).

Customers were interested in having more direct, personal contact with the agency and learning about and becoming more involved in Reclamation programs and initiatives. On the whole, customers rated Reclamation's job performance as fair to good in 14 program areas. Customers rated Reclamation's performance highest in its more traditional mission objectives (e.g., water delivery and power generation) and lower, although still better than fair, in its newer mission responsibilities (e.g., water conservation and environmental protection).

Although the overall responses to the Customer Satisfaction Survey indicated favorable impressions of Reclamation's customer service, a significant number of respondents (25% to 35%) consistently expressed concerns regarding several areas. Significant findings of the survey were grouped into eight broad categories: (1) stakeholder involvement, (2) management of customer information, (3) customer relationships, (4) government bureaucracy, (5) consistency, (6) accessibility of staff, (7) timeliness of responses, and (8) Reclamation's changing role.

The recommendations presented in this report would, if implemented, address many of these concerns. They are structured around four potential program initiatives, which are to (1) develop and implement a customer management system, (2) establish an outreach program, (3) review business practices, and (4) review stakeholder roles and receive stakeholder input. The relationship between issues and recommendations is displayed in the following table.

Table 4.1 Issues and Recommendations Resulting from the Customer Satisfaction Survey

Issue	Recommendation
Stakeholder involvement	Review stakeholder roles and receive stakeholder input.
Management of customer information	Develop and implement a customer management system.
Customer relationships	Establish an outreach program.
Government bureaucracy	Review business practices.
Consistency	Review business practices.
Accessibility of staff	Review business practices. Develop and implement a customer management system.
Timeliness of responses	Develop and implement a customer management system. Review business practices.
Reclamation's changing role	Establish an outreach program. Review business practices.